

Maria Spindler

How do you embrace the Big Picture?¹

The development of awareness as a potential of collective growth through senior management

Abstract

The potential of a company is closely connected to an awareness of the whole in relation to its parts and an understanding of its differences. The extent to which senior management is able to embrace, integrate, connect and correlate, influences a company's possibilities when it comes to shaping its future.

Increasing self awareness

What has senior management's 'big picture' got to do with the development of awareness and the success of your company? Behind this lies the question of how much potential (complexity) a company grasps and realises, and the links and connections it is able to make.

How much potential we embrace and integrate depends on how developed our awareness is.

The place from which we recognise and act, and the quality of these actions is connected to the development of our own awareness in relation to the world.

Awareness is the inner place from which we reflect and make judgements about ourselves as individuals (and systems), about others, and about the world. It is our capacity for moral judgement. And it is the place from which we create and bring the foundations for future possibilities into reality. The development of awareness requires conscious perception of one's own thinking, feeling, and acting in relation to oneself, other human beings, and to the world. This development is in accordance with one's level of awareness about patterns such as conventions, rules, structures, processes, principles, cultures, values and norms, of individuals and social systems (teams, organisations, and society).

Opening up our inner and outer space

Our perception of inner events and experiences is the magical inner place from which everything begins. The more fully integrated we become as we develop individually, the more awareness occurs concerning our own relationship with the world, the more our inner picture becomes interwoven with the outer picture in a multi-faceted way, the more possibili-

¹ A shorter German version of this text is published under the title 'Big Picture: das Große Ganze im Blick' in *Hernsteiner* 2/2016.

ties we can apprehend in terms of future potential, the more future we can bring into our present.

To respond in an unmediated, unreflective way, greatly narrows our scope for action as we recognise fewer connections and complexities. When we observe ourselves without reacting reflexively, a space is opened up between our own perceptions and our own reactions².

Between stimulus and response there lies an open space. In this open space lies our own power in deciding how to respond. In this response lies the force of our growth and the freedom we ourselves have opened up.

In this inner place between stimulus and response lives our current force and future power and also our humanity. A self-created clear space for our freedom, our intention, our potential, our purpose and also our own self-determined individual growth. The potential for the shaping of our future, for ourselves, our management, our companies, and for the shaping of the whole world.

Deciding about growth

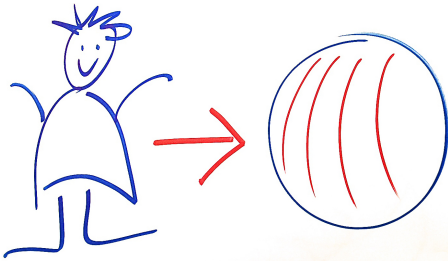
How much space for potential a company's leaders can make themselves aware of the quality of that potential for themselves and their company, is connected to how they conceive their approach to the world. It is connected to the idea of growth. In the area of moral development we can differentiate between two principles for approaching the world³:

The horizontal world approach grasps and produces more and more of the world, more product innovation, more of the market, more dividends, more customers, more knowledge, more writing, bigger apartments, more relationships, etc... according to the same logic. We direct our glance primarily outwards, towards others, towards competition, the neighbours, etc. We direct our view towards the world, and thereby at the same time we are separated from the world. If this approach to the world is not enriched in a qualitative way, life in the eyes of the observer gradually turns negative (there is a downward spiral, emotional decline, demotivation, ...)

CEO quotation: 'I'm treading water, and I need to change something. We're growing rapidly, but at the same time we're losing our sense of innovation, our intensity and motivation. The beginning was so dynamic and successful...now a spiral threatens to pull me and the company downwards. I am groping in the half-dark towards the dark'.

² This stimulus-response following an automated, habitual pattern, is named 'downloading' by Otto Scharmer.

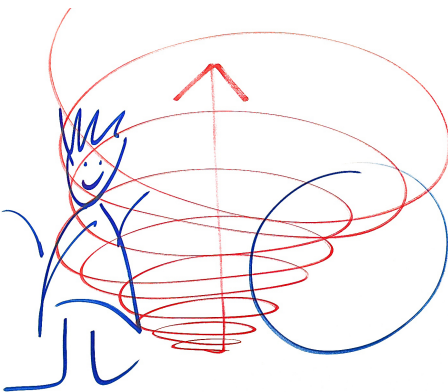
³ See further Spindler, M. & Steger, M. (2008) Metamanagement in gebildeten Unternehmen. Überlegungen zur Handlungsfähigkeit in der vernetzten Wirtschaft.



Graphic 1: Horizontal world approach – more of the same quality

The vertical world approach involves continuously differentiating and integrating. It concerns qualitative development and leads to denser, deeper, broader, more interconnected awareness of our ourselves in our interplay (circularity) with the world. In the area of moral development we talk about various levels of quality (spiral development). We connect ourselves to the world and this connection forms within us in a more conscious way. We are in the world and the world is in us – holistically. The main focus here is co-evolutionary connection; the development of relationships with and within the corresponding context.

Whether you embrace your life and the world in a quantitative or/and qualitative way is decided by your view of the nature of growth.



Graphic 2: Vertical world approach – Development of different qualities

Qualitative, integrative-differentiating growth

A vertical approach to the world is the pre-requisite for a high-quality ‘big picture’ – and a qualitative handling of quantity. In the last seven decades this concept has been comprehensively developed and empirically researched. The seven to nine stages of development can be divided into three points of focus: I, We, Us.

‘I’ FOCUS (preconventional, magical perception and action): is driven by impulses and is self-orientated. Stimulus and response lie close together. Motto: ‘I am at the centre of the world, at one with the world and conquer the world’. The ‘Ego’ is in the foreground and believes its own perception reflects the reality of the outer world. The assumption is that rules are unchangeable, and justice and punishment depend on authority. One’s own moral judgement is orientated towards punishment and obedience as well as on cost-effectiveness and reciprocity.

‘We’ FOCUS (conventional, logical perception and action): is factual, rational, linear, community-determined. Motto: ‘As a community we need a just and reasonable world, which has systems and rules.’ We recognise that the rules of a system (group, organisation, society) are set up and can be changed. We place increasing value on justice and equality. Moral judgement is orientated towards reciprocal, interpersonal expectations, relationships and agreements (the ‘well behaved child’), as well as towards the social system and social conscience (law and order).

‘Us’ FOCUS: (postconventional, integral perception and action): is relativising, systemic, differentiating and integrating at the same time. ‘There are many truths throughout the world, we can shape them ourselves consciously – collectively and with responsibility. We generate individual and collective meaning – for ourselves and our community at the same time. Our moral judgement orientates itself towards the social contract associated with individual rights and with universally ethical principles.

Kant’s ‘imperative’ is seen in this view: ‘Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.’ We judge morals and punishment as connected to, as well as independent from, authorities. When making moral decisions, we take into account the intention of the person acting and differentiate between our own views and those of others. We recognise differences and integrate them. Feedback, along with what is new and what is different, are gifts for our own development. The main priority is essential renewal as an act of co-creation for collective future betterment.

Otto Sharmer calls this focus ‘seeing and acting through the whole’. This acting through awareness is also discussed under the keyword ‘mindfulness’.

When acting with an ‘Us’-focus, we humans are most likely to be able to act in a way that benefits the whole. We have a complex awareness and an ability to make moral judgements where we recognise, evaluate and set in relation to each other various moral principles and approaches to the world. We can recognise different approaches (and leadership qualifications) and employ people according to their possibilities. Keywords: recruitment within the management board, facilitating the choice of the next CEO, facilitating collaborations, steering processes, creating foundations for valuable cooperation, leadership, organisation. Senior management has the opportunity to foster change that is good for the whole of society. Keywords: corporate responsibility, networks, co-creation of movements and swarms. And senior management can become aware of a big picture in which people can be brought into connection with each other for the sake of shaping the future. Key words: supply chain, development, long-term win-win customer relations, social movements, social inventions that help develop society, and which renew businesses and the world from the inside.

In the ‘I’ and ‘We’ mode, you embrace alone; in the ‘Us’ mode, you embrace collectively the ‘I/We/Us’ forms of awareness.

In connection to these three states of awareness, the following expressions can be met:

- Development from one stage to the next takes place as mutation, as transformation. Through coping with unfamiliarity, irritation or crisis, the next new pattern of behavior

our becomes possible. One's individual world view and one's own behavioural logic change fundamentally from one stage to the next. The way one acts becomes more complex, more comprehensive, more differentiated and more integrated.

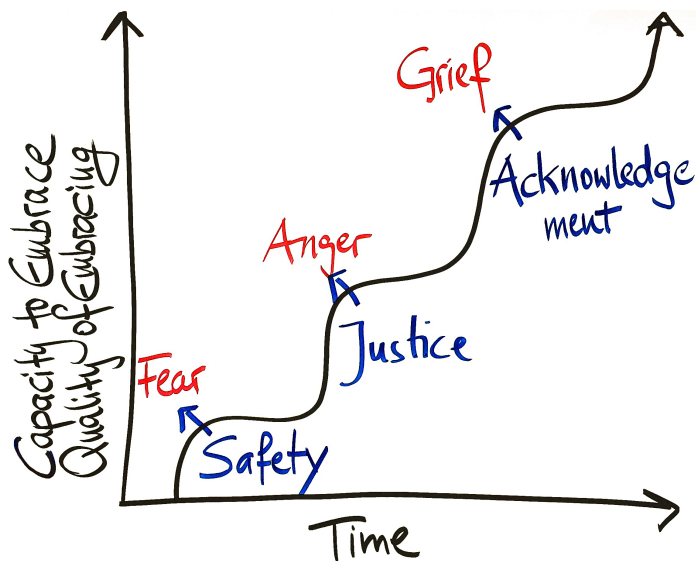
- Under stress we often fall back on previous stages of development. We experience this as tunnel vision, being unable to think straight, or something similar. The patterns of behaviour are not replaced, they remain alongside one another.
- Not all humans develop themselves throughout their lives, in terms of a broadening approach to the world and scope of action. Whether someone wants to develop themselves can only be decided by each person or system.
- People who remain at a less complex stage of development, see and act from their current behavioural logic. They don't recognise the further complexity (differentiation and integration) of the subsequent levels as helpful.
- People with more differentiated-integrated awareness understand people with less differentiated-integrated awareness and can support them. Indeed, they also carry these awareness qualities within themselves.

Above all, the latter has implications for senior management in terms of the quality of their interventions and their embracing. The choices, growth and capacity for co-creation of senior management for the whole of the organisation can, through the development of their own awareness, become more conscious, more complex and more integrated.

Recognising the quality of growth

How do you, as senior management team, directorate, chairperson, etc., discern the quality of your own growth and that of your company? Tonnie van der Zouwen presents a model that can be read in accordance with the three qualities of awareness (I, We, Us). What's interesting about this is that feelings as 'awareness sensors' give information about organised systems.

In the expression of people's feelings behind which are teams, organisations, social systems, society we can perceive which awareness quality an action can be attributed to, what is needed and what the next step in the development process could be:



Grafic 4: Logic of feeling, according to van der Zouwen 2012

I: Safety and survival are the primary needs of the natural, unmediated, emotionally unreflective system. If security is experienced as insufficient, individual and collective anxiety increases. Stimulus is followed closely by response. To give assurance of survival would then be a source of short-term support. To place a reflective/clarifying focus on justice when working together (rules, structures, discipline), would be the next sustainable measure for the development of the system and its individuals.

We: Justice for all is the main need of the socially disciplined system. If the current situation is felt to be unjust, anger spreads against the establishment. In this kind of culture, finger-pointing is normal. To recognise the 'unjust' situation as it is, could be the next step for the company to co-create its own self-organised system.

Us: Acknowledgement, in terms of the acceptance of difference, otherness, foreignness, and uncertainty, is possible. Grief over what is not optimal, functional, fair, tailor-made, etc., can be emotionally expressed in words and rituals. This integrated letting go (not alteration or exclusion) allows for newness, for collective self-renewal: for the shaping, responsibility, organisation of a company and its uncertain future in society.

Shared possibilities for the future suddenly come into focus. This quality of embracing signifies interconnectedness within a state of freedom and makes reciprocal commitment possible. Keyword: interdependence.

Quality of embracing and the capacity to embrace comprise the site from which the big picture arises before our inner eye. Which of your feelings no longer underlie the stimulus-response pattern is a deciding factor in what kind of quality of embracing and what kind of power you can muster as an individual and as a senior management system.

A company's effectiveness when it comes to renewal depends on the extent to which its senior management is able to embrace: to recognise, differentiate, welcome. The quality of embracing provides information about the nature of senior management's awareness. The

more levels of awareness you can identify, acknowledge and support, the more of the company's renewal-synergies you enable to be stimulated in synergy with others from your inner core.

How, how much and whom are you embracing at the moment for what collective future?

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